Dealers report signs of recovery at Show

CHICAGO — Futurist Carol Farmer's description of the 1990s as the "Less Decade" had some validity at the National Home Center Show last week.

Yet while the show was decidedly smaller, the contention by Farmer, who addressed conventioneers the day before the show opened, that businesses could thrive in a lower consumption decade was supported by vendors and retailers in attendance.

"This year's attitude is the flip side of gloomy," said Charlie Whipple, vp-marketing of Sterling Plumbing Group. As proof, Whipple pointed to a Chicago *Tribune* headline: "Recovery Sighted."

If the mood last year was sullen because of the recession and the Gulf War, retail business in this year's first quarter reflected optimism and improved health. Retailers such as Handy Andy, Payless Cashways in the Midwest, Builders Emporium and Lanoga Corp. on the West Coast and Grossman's and Channel in the East all reported increases in their first quarter business.

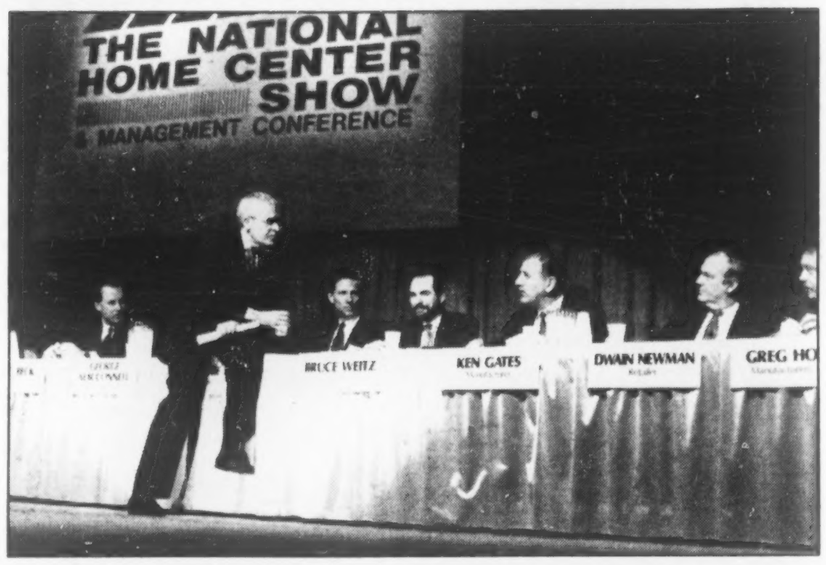
However, Ron Rashkow, Handy Andy's chairman, was wary about comparisons to 1991 "when the world stopped" because of the war.

What overstored market?

The robustness of the industry was signaled by news emanating from the show:

- Virginia-based HomeQuarters Warehouse confirmed its plans to open stores in Memphis, Tenn.; Manchester, N.H.; St. Louis; and Cincinnati by May. *Crain's Detroit Business* also reports that HQ has six new stores on tap for Detroit,

(Cont. on page 49)



***Professor Arthur Miller** (on table) moderates "Partnership Wars!" with 14 industry panelists.* NHCN photo

B&D out to reclaim glory days

Pitches DeWalt line to combat foreign competition

NHCN photo

***B&D hopes to recapture** a greater share of the professional tool market with the recent introduction of its 33-sku DeWalt line.*

by Gary S. Ruderman

NATIONAL REPORT — Not too long ago, when people spoke of portable power tools, they invariably meant products made by Black & Decker.

The Towson, Md.-based company held a dominant position in the world market, both on the consumer end and even among industrial and commercial users.

But in the mid-1980s, B&D was rocked by foreign competitors such as Japan's Makita Electric Tool Co. which marketed lines of professional-grade power tools that displaced B&D's products as most favored among U.S. home centers.

Makita, even by B&D's reckoning, now controls about one-fifth of the $1 billion professional-grade tool market in the U.S., or more than two-fifths of the $450 million of these products sold through retail channels.

But with the recent introduction of its 33-sku yellow and black DeWalt line of professional-grade portable, cordless and benchtop equipment, B&D has fired the opening salvo in what is shaping up to be a real market war to regain its past glory.

(Continued on page 46)

***Allen (on tractor)** shoots one of a series of commercials for Builders Square as their new spokesman.* Photo courtesy of Ross Roy Retail

Builders Square recruits star power for new TV ads

Signs Allen of 'Home Improvement'

NATIONAL REPORT — The nation's fourth largest home improvement chain may have pulled off the publicity coup of the year in signing a top-rated television star to a two-year advertising pact.

Builders Square's first commercial with Tim Allen, star of the ABC sitcom "Home Improvement," debuted March 9 in more than 50 markets.

Allen and the 146-unit chain inked the exclusive deal for an undisclosed sum on Feb. 27. Shooting in the Detroit area stores began March 2.

Allen, the macho yet bumbling host of a fictional do-it-yourself television show based in his hometown of Detroit, will also appear in Builders Square's radio and newspaper ads as well as promotional events such as grand openings. The TV spots, according to Builders Square's publicity firm, will promote seasonal projects like lawn and garden, installation services and holiday shopping.

Builders Square's ad agency approached Allen last year.

"There is a credible link between Tim's character and the business we're in," said Mark James, vp-marketing for the San Antonio, Texas-based chain. "He's believable [but] he's not an expert, which makes his persona extremely approachable." James stressed that Allen was indeed a DIYer. Builders Square's target audience is the 25- to 55-year-old

(Continued on page 46)

Lowe's 1991 sales up by 8%

Larger-format stores record the highest gains

by John Sinisi

NORTH WILKESBORO, N.C. — A significant gain in the fourth quarter boosted Lowe's Cos.' fiscal 1991 sales by 8 percent over last year. But a one-time writedown during that quarter squeezed the company's end-of-year bottom line.

Sales of $709.6 million during the three months ended Jan. 31 were 21 percent higher than last year's fourth-quarter revenue of $586 million.

Lowe's also recorded a loss of $43.3 million for the fourth term. The company took a pretax restructuring charge of $71.3 million to reflect expected costs of converting its 123 smaller stores to its larger prototype over the next four years.

The one-time writedown dragged fiscal 1991 profits down 91 percent to $6.5 million. But sales for the year improved 8 percent to $3.1 billion.

A breakout of Lowe's big-store versus smaller-store earnings offers a clearer view of the company's successes in 1991. The 31 stores with the larger format that Lowe's unveiled in 1989 posted 20 percent gains in comparable store sales for each 1991 quarter.

Consumer durables and what Lowe's calls "home center products" led the 1991 sales gain. Consumer electronics was the leader among the durables categories, and lawn & garden, home decor, lighting, tools and bath were the strongest among home center products. Contractor

(Continued on page 50)

Pay 'N Pak pares again

Nine-store downsizing to strengthen performance

by Robyn Taylor

KENT, Wash. — In what could be the last of its major downsizing measures, Pay 'N Pak closed nine more stores, restructured its top management team and laid off more than 200 employees at the end of last month.

The company closed four stores in Colorado, in Ft. Collins, Greeley, Colorado Springs and Pueblo; two stores in Kansas, in Hutchinson and Topeka; its Ontario, Ore., unit and one of its six Portland stores; and its unit in Sioux Falls, S.D.

Pay 'N Pak is now left with one store in Colorado, in Grand Junction, said president John Markley.

Markley said the nine stores averaged only about 20,000 square feet and were located in predominantly rural areas. They accounted for less than 10 percent of the company's total sales volume, and the chain decided the closures would strengthen its overall financial performance.

Markley said Pay 'N Pak may go back into the Ontario, Ore., market with a larger replacement store, but has not located an appropriate site yet.

"It's a market we still want to be in," he said.

About 75 percent of the merchandise in the closed

(Continued on page 50)

NHCN photo

***Despite downsizing,** Pay 'N Pak is investing in new and remodeled stores.*

HomeClub commits to new identity

Plans media blitz to acquaint shoppers with HomeBase name

FULLERTON, Calif. — A rose by any other name . . . .

Or so hopes HomeClub, the warehouse chain of 73 stores that decided to change the name of all its warehouse units to HomeBase by the end of April.

Company president Jim Halpin said the name change was inevitable, explaining that the stores had not been "clubs" for quite some time and the identification was confusing some consumers.

"We decided to get it over with," Halpin said.

Within the next two months, all stores should have the new HomeBase signage and logo, said Halpin. The logo, which will preserve the "look" and colors of the original HomeClub logo, will include a new tagline: "America's Best Home Improvement Warehouse."

Halpin said the company

HomeBase
AMERICA'S BEST HOME IMPROVEMENT
WAREHOUSE

will not make any dramatic changes associated with the name change, but it is planning a major media blitz to introduce it to customers. In April, the company will launch both TV, radio and print ad campaigns, said Ronald Gilmore, vp advertising and marketing.

HomeClub is also in the process of renovating 24 stores in California, Nevada and Washington. The remodels should be complete by this spring and will feature new 12-foot-high racking, compared with the old 8-foot-high fixtures; Paint Labs, or enclosed color-matching centers staffed by paint technicians; and expanded carpeting, kitchen and lighting departments (*NHCN*, Oct. 28, 1991).

Once these stores are reformatted, the chain will begin

(Continued on page 49)

Chicago's Gee Lumber to close remaining units

CHICAGO — Gee Lumber Co., the once-venerable Chicago area retailer, is liquidating its retail business.

The privately held company began selling off inventory at its remaining five stores as well as accounts receivables on Feb. 24.

Nancy Gee, the company's third-generation president, said Gee Lumber's longtime lender decided not to lend working capital for seasonal inventory purchases to the shrinking company. The liquidation means that 150 employees will be out of work.

Gee Lumber had nine stores and sales of $21 million in 1990.

Regardless of the changes Gee Lumber had made in reducing expenses and payroll over the last three years, the bank, which Nancy Gee declined to identify, "got nervous," she explained.

"We were at a point where we could beat the economy and the competition [which includes Builders Square and Handy Andy]," Gee said. Without inventory for the busy spring and summer season, Gee and her father, company chairman Jim Gee Sr., decided on Feb. 14 that it would be best to liquidate the operation.

She said the Gee family's decision to spin off four stores to brother Jim Gee Jr. four years ago was a "mistake" that hurt the firm. Those four stores were still owned by Gee Lumber but operated under the name Sawhorse Home Centers. They all failed, and the company had difficulty selling the locations in the southern suburbs of Chicago.

Last year, Gee Lumber closed four of its own units and sold off its lumber treating business.

Nancy Gee said the liquidation could possibly be completed between May and July and a new company of one or perhaps two stores could emerge.

Highland American files Ch. 7

Gypsonite maker didn't have sufficient backing, demand

EAST PROVIDENCE, R.I. — "We were the wrong company in the wrong location at the wrong time."

That's the assessment by Mark Hogan, the treasurer of Highland American, a manufacturer here that two years ago introduced an innovative product called Gypsonite, a wallboard produced with recycled paper. The company liquidated on Feb. 20, leaving in doubt the future of this environmentally oriented product.

Company officials were scrambling early this month to raise new capital to buy back Highland American, which is currently in the hands of its lender, a Helsinki, Finland-based bank known as Kansallis-Osake-Pankki.

As a result of the filing under Chapter 7 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code, Highland has laid off its remaining 60 employees. It closed its mill in East Providence, R.I., on Jan. 31, citing the sagging New England economy and high energy costs as significant reasons.

Furman Lumber, the Billerica, Mass.-based wholesaler that was the chief distributor of Gypsonite, has switched over to a similar product called FiberBond, which is produced by Louisiana-Pacific in Port Oxford, Nova Scotia.

"What we needed was financial restructuring," said Hawk Furman, the former president of Furman Lumber who helped found Highland but was let go last Dec. 31.

Furman confirmed that the bank, which had $30 million invested in Highland (48 percent of that loan being held by DeutscheBank in West Germany), had demanded that the company's shareholders, who had kicked in some $10 million, put in more equity. The shareholders, in turn, said they would do so only if the banks restructured their debt.

(Continued on page 46)

Builders Square ends 1991 with record sales, income

TROY, Mich. — Builders Square had record sales and operating income in fiscal 1991, reported its parent company, K mart Corp., here.

The San Antonio-based chain ended the year with 144 stores. And for the fiscal year ended Jan. 29, the company surpassed the $2 billion sales plateau for the first time. Its sales of $2.05 billion were 8.4 percent ahead of the previous year's.

Builders Square's operating income increased 27.2 percent to $74 million. Compstore sales rose 7 percent.

"The year 1991 has been a good one for us despite the weak economy," said president and ceo Glen R. Mielke in a prepared release.

"Over the past year we have refined our focus, both in geographic markets and merchandise mix, and feel that we are poised to continue to improve our results in the years ahead," Mielke said.

Quality is key to selling kitchens

(Continued from page 1)

Economic doldrums that are causing subtle shifts in selecting kitchen cabinetry are, predictably, dictating changes in the industry as well. On the supply side, companies like Merillat, which launched its upscale semi-custom Amera series this year, used to offer only prefinished stock lines.

And on the retail side, in-store inventory levels are declining, as home center operators would rather invest in upgrading their displays and in other faster-turning merchandise, rather than tie up their money and storage space with a backlog of cabinets.

Vendors and their wholesalers recognize this, and are supporting their retailer clients by shipping more frequently.

Improved turnaround on orders has helped maintain Channel's kitchen department cash flow, according to vp and gmm Ethan Klausner. By going through Merillat distributor Long Island Stove in Suffolk County, N.Y., Channel can have orders shipped straight to customers in 10 business days.

One manufacturer, Triangle-Pacific, is using its new Bruce Cabinets line to seize on the trends toward quicker distribution and more-affordable, high-fashion choices.

By joining the semi-custom cabinet fray already inhabited by such suppliers as Bremmer, Schrock, Kraftmaid and Riviera, Tri-Pac is giving consumers a lower-price option without any significant dilution of style or selection.

Big R Stores, a nine-unit chain based in Kokomo, Ind., took on the Bruce line last fall. Kitchen buyer Joe Schreyer noted that customers didn't recognize the Bruce name at first but that the line is gaining in popularity weekly. He believes Big R will by this summer make back the $17,000 it invested in the nine Bruce displays.

Some home centers are taking chances on fresher styles in an attempt to stimulate sales.

Plywood Minnesota's kitchen buyer, Ellen Boschwitz, finds that a raised-panel cathedral look could be the new darling in her area.

"Glass in the doors is becoming popular, too, especially at the better and best price points," she said. "And a medium-color oak is finding a place among the whiter shades in terms of color."

Lumbermen's professional kitchen designer, Steve McCloud, thinks he's found an old look with a new twist.

"Flat-panel cabinets are coming back, but they're a little different than [in] the 1970s." Now, they feature a 180-degree bull-nosed edge on all drawers and doors, and a quadrant-routed pull cut into the bottoms of the drawer and edges of the doors instead of handles.

Pay 'N Pak shrinks, reorganizes

(Continued from page 4)

stores was redistributed throughout the chain. The rest is being sold off through clearance sales.

One hundred and eighty store employees and 25 home office associates were immediately laid off as a result of the closings. Another 30 corporate employees will be let go in April, Markley said. Those employees will have the opportunity to stay with Pay 'N Pak in field positions.

Markley said about 90 new jobs were created in the eight remodeled stores in the Puget Sound area, which had grand reopenings on March 18.

In other news, Pay 'N Pak reorganized its management by adding two new executives.

Alfred Koontz Jr. has taken over the position of executive vp and cfo. Ronald Redpath became the company's new director of financial planning. Both served in similar positions with Todd Shipyards Corp.

The Seattle-based shipyard successfully emerged from Chapter 11 last year.

Greg Maffei, Pay 'N Pak's former cfo, will remain executive vp and a board member, and will focus on real estate and reorganization issues.

Lowe's sales up 8%; profits falter

(Continued from page 3)

products (i.e., lumber and building materials), suffered a 2 percent sales decline. Gross margins held at roughly 24 percent in 1991.

Inventory, at $602.8 million, was up 31 percent over last year's. The company explained that the increase is tied to the firm's need to keep its larger stores fully stocked and ready for spring business.

Apparently, the chain did well to prepare. Sales for February were up 37 percent compared with the same month last year.

Project Ideas & Know-How

The best way to increase your product sales!

Sunset is the recognized leader in the do-it-yourself information field.

What does this mean to you? A guaranteed way to increase your sales of tools and materials.

How? When you increase the D-I-Y competence and confidence level of your customers, you increase their capacity and willingness to buy your store's products.

Sunset is not only the best how-to information source available, it is the most profitable!

Why? Sunset inventory turns . . . typically 5 to 6 times per year, for a GMROI of 3.0 or better.

Teaching how-to skills and providing project ideas is our only business and has been for more than 50 years.

And, we'll help you sell our books and videos:
- In-store service
- FREE displays
- Co-op advertising

Bring D-I-Y know-how and projects to your customers and you'll sell more tools and materials . . . guaranteed!

Call (800) 227-7346.
In California, (800) 321-0372.

Sunset
BOOKS & VIDEO

© Sunset Publishing Corporation

Circle (030) on Reader Service Card

Company Index

Ace Hardware 36
Akin Building Centers 15
All American Home Center 49
Allied Specialty & Manufacturing 10
Alline Laminated 34
American Standard 38
Amerock 18
Armstrong 32
Baucher & Slack 46
Beckermann 34
Behr 7
Big R Stores 50
BJ's Wholesale Club 49
Black & Decker 3,46
Bremmer 50
Bruce Cabinets 32,34,50
Bruce Hardwood Floors 32
Buena Park Lumber 18
Builder's Best 18
Builders Emporium 3,20,38
Builders Square 2,3,4,24,32,34,46
Busy Beaver 2,32
Carriage House 34
Catalina 7
Central Hardware 20
Channel 3,18,49,50
City Mill 49
C. N. Weber 10
Collins & Aikman 7
Colorgen 7
Consumers Kitchen and Bath 24
Corian 34
Courtesy Home Centers 24
Craftsman 46
Dayton 42
De Soto 7
Design House 49
DeWalt 3,46
Douglas Lumber 1
Dutch Boy 7
Dynasty 7
E. L. Mustee & Sons 36,40
Elkay 38
Ernst 15,18,32
Floor-to-Ceiling Stores 32,49
Furman Lumber 4,46
Furrow 18,46
Gee Lumber 4
General Building Products 24,34
Glidden 7
Great Plains Supply 46
Grossman's 3,36,46
Haas Cabinets 1
Handy Andy 3,4,24,46
Harrisons & Crosfield plc 2
H&C Timber and Building Supplies 2
Hechinger 38
Highland American 4,46
Hinckley Home Centers 38,42
Hitachi 46
HoM 7
HomeBase 4
HomeClub 4,18,46,49
Home Depot 2,7,24,46,49
HomeQuarters Warehouse 3
Hugh M. Woods 18,46
Imperia 34
Industrial Marketing Research Panel 42
James Lumber 42
Jenn-Air 40
Jerry's Home Center 38
Karp Associates 40
Kaskia 34
Kinkaid 42
K mart 4
Knox Lumber 18,46
Kohler 38
Kraftmaid 50
Lanoga Corp. 3
Long Island Stove 50
Louisiana-Pacific 4
Lowe's 2,3,46,49,50
Lumberjack 18,46
Lumbermen's 50
Lyons Industries 40,49
Makita 3,46
Masco 42,49
Merillat 50
Mibro Group 10
Milwaukee Electric 46
Minwax 46
Modern Fiberglas 36
Moen 38
Moore's 2
Mr. Goodbuys 49
National Building Material Distributors Assoc. 1
National Home Centers 49
Neptune 38,42
North American Wholesale Lumber Assoc. 1
Pay 'N Pak 4,18,38,50
Payless Cashways 1,3,18,20,46
Peerless 42
Pelican Building Centers 49
Pergament 1,49
Plain 'N Fancy 34
Plaskolite 40,49
Plywood Minnesota 50
Plywood Panels Inc. 2
Prestigeline 7
Quality 34
Quinlan's 18
Record Tool 10
Rickel 7,46
Riviera 50
Royal United Tool 49
Royce 7
Russin Lumber Co. 49
Ryobi 46
Sawhorse Home Centers 4
Schrock 34,40,50
Sears 46
Skil 46
Somerville Lumber 18,32,46
Spenard Builders Supply 18
Sterling Plumbing Group 3,38,40,42,49
Strober Brothers 18,42
SunnyWood Products 40
Supply One 36
Sutherlands 20
Texas Homecare 22
Tile Care Products 40
Todd Shipyards Corp. 50
Trayco 49
Triangle-Pacific 32,34,50
Uncle Sam's 49
Underwriters Laboratories 46
Universal-Rundle 49
Val-Test 10
Vanply Paneling 2
Waban 49
Weyerhaeuser 2
Wickes Lumber 2
Woodbury's 2
Ziegler Building Centers 49

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use, or the internal or personal use of specific clients, is granted by *National Home Center News* provided that the base fee of $.25 per copy is paid directly to Copyright Clearance Center (CCC), 27 Congress Street, Salem, MA 01970; telephone 508-744-3350. For those organizations that have been granted a photocopy license by CCC, a separate system of payment has been arranged. The fee code for users of the Transactional Reporting Service is **0192-6672/91/$.25 PER ARTICLE.**

Advertisers Index

For further information on products advertised in this issue, fax or mail the free Reader Service Cards provided in retailer and wholesaler subscriber copies, located between pages 6/7 and 46/47. Refer to the page numbers, and **reader service numbers** listed below.

Boldface denotes reader service number

Allgeier Computer Corp. 34, **016**
American Shower & Bath Corp. 25, **011**
Andersen Corp. 26-31, **050**
Blue Lustre 32, **013**
Carlon 39, **025**
E.L. Mustee 34, **015**
Eljer 5, **001**
Encon 37, **021**
Ergodyne 12-13, **006**
Fasco 33, **014**
Fluid Management/Miller Mfg. 38, **023**
Fluidmaster 11, **005**
Franklin Brass 14, **007**
Gemini 7, **003**
Genova 52, **032**
Georgia-Pacific 8-9, **004**
Gladson & Associates 42
Glidden 38, **024**
Green Earth Publishing Co. 32, **012**
Interbath 19, **009**
Knape & Vogt 47, **028**
Kraftmaid 23, **010**
Krylon 48, **029**
Larson Manufacturing 41, **026**
Macco Adhesives 36, **020**
Masterchem Industries 43, **027**
Merillat 21, **055**
Moen Group 35, **017**
National Manufacturing 36, **019**
Peerless Faucet 6, **002**
Polaroid 51, **031**
States Industries 38, **022**
Sunny Wood Products 16-17, **008**
Sunset Publishing 50, **030**
U.S. Switch 36, **018**

This index is provided for the convenience of our readers, and as a service to our advertisers. While every precaution is taken, the publishers assume no liability for errors or omissions.

National Home Center News (ISSN 0192-6772) is published 23 times a year, twice a month, monthly in December, by Lebhar-Friedman Inc., 425 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022. Subscription rate: $89 per year in the U.S.; $99 in Canada; $239 in all other countries (air mail only). Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Please send address changes to Subscription Dept., National Home Center News, P.O. Box 31185, Tampa, Fla. 33631-3185. Vol. 18, No. 6, Copyright© 1992 by Lebhar-Friedman Inc. All rights reserved.

C5130-6

National Home Center News®

Vol. 18. No. 7 $5 a copy The Journal of News & Trends for Home Improvement Retailers. Co-ops & Wholesalers. Published by Lebhar-Friedman Inc. Apr. 6. 1992

Housing spurt ignites lumber supply debate

Lumber dealers not ready to stock up . . . yet

by John Sinisi

NATIONAL REPORT — News of the two-month spurt in new home construction did not excite Bob Trexler, general buyer for Carolina Builders' Edwards Lumber Co. in Charlotte, N.C. Granted, he saw an improvement in his own market, but not in the areas he would have liked.

"There's been an awful lot of tract-home building around here," Trexler said. "But the bigger part of our business is in custom-home packages, and the increase is slower there."

Lumber and building materials buyers in the rest of the country are a little more pleased with the Commerce Department's report in mid-March that February housing starts climbed 9.6 percent to an annualized 1.3 million units. But like Trexler, they are not impressed enough to step up inventory.

***Although February housing starts** climbed 9.6 percent, many dealers are reluctant to step up inventory.* Photo courtesy of NAHB

True, nearly every lumberyard is storing more lumber now than it had at this time last year, but that has little to do with evidence of a recovery.

"The lumber market's early movement forced us to go in and take a heavy position two months earlier than usual," said Dennis Taylor, who buys lumber and building materials for Ogden, Utah-based Anderson Lumber. Taylor said lumber price increases, which usually hit in March, came as early as December of last year to his region.

(Continued on page 60)

NeRLA 'sends' message to Congress

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — A few chosen Congress members will be receiving a 2 by 4 that packs a punch in their mail, as angry lumber dealers seek new ways to bring their message home.

Last month the Northeast Retail Lumber Association (NeRLA) mailed out 2 by 4s to the 75 members of Congress from New England and New York, to protest the increase in lumber prices.

"The overzealous minority with a well-intentioned desire to look out for rare plants and animals [is] devastating an entire industry in the Northwest," said the letter attached to the 12-inch-long piece of lumber.

"And they are damaging New York and New England's ability to pull out of the recession through the traditional route of a healthy housing market," it continued.

The letter also stated that lumber

(Continued on page 60)

Trade groups lobby to lift timber bans

by Gary Ruderman

NATIONAL REPORT — Lumber dealers from around the country swarmed on Capitol Hill last week with the message that a "sustained economic recovery is in jeopardy" unless Congress lifts restrictions on timber harvests and passes tax law changes to spur first-time home buying.

The message was carried by members of the National Lumber and Building Material Dealers Association (NLBMDA).

Preceding their visit March 24, a first-time coalition of the NLBMDA, the National Association of Home Builders, the National Forest Products Association and the American Forest Resource Alliance issued a report stating that skyrocketing lumber prices threaten to stymie housing construction.

(Continued on page 60)

84 Lumber to bolster contractor sales force

EIGHTY-FOUR, Pa. — In keeping with chairman Joe Hardy's desire to target an affordable-housing market niche, 84 Lumber plans to expand its contractor sales program by adding 200 more representatives this spring.

As part of its focus on affordable housing, the chain will add 200 reps.

The 342-unit chain also promoted three of its veteran contractor sales representatives (CSRs) to special area managers responsible for training and supporting the larger staff.

Tracy Curry will manage the South; Fred Molk will be responsible for the Midwest; and Chuck Mullooly will take care of CSRs in the North. The three started their new posts on Feb. 1 and report to 84's vp-operations, Jerry Smith.

The area managers' immediate concentration is on

(Continued on page 62)

Ikea shopper sets up camp

Altruistic grandson vies for top prize as first customer

by Robyn Taylor

FONTANA, Calif. — John Paul, a 30-year-old outdoor survival instructor, prides himself on his ability to live off the land for weeks on end.

For details on Ikea's Fontana, Calif., store, see page 3

The British native and now a Los Angeleno, Paul has slept in all sorts of adverse conditions. Yet he never dreamed he'd spend 17 days camped on the concrete pavement outside Ikea's new store here.

So why did Paul camp outside Ikea, setting a company record for the person who waited the longest to be the first customer in the door?

(Continued on page 61)

NHCN photo

***John Paul** and his 'home' of 17 days as he awaited opening of the Fontana unit.*

SECOND CLASS

********** MIXED STATES
0027872 HC 9108 009/02350
JAYNE LONG
CONGRESSIONAL INFORMATION 1
4520 EAST WEST HWY/STE 800
BETHESDA MD 20814

Cologne Fair draws more foreign visitors p. 3
Dealers answer demand for window treatments p. 13
NHCN honors Golden Hammer winners p. 19

INDUSTRY STATS

Home is where your bucks are

Average price of a 2,200-square-foot, single-family home in 1991	
Most expensive	
Beverly Hills, Calif.	$1,184,167
La Jolla, Calif.	780,000
San Francisco	604,000
Honolulu	594,750
Greenwich, Conn.	569,000
Expensive	
Modesto, Calif.	240,750
Providence, R.I.	238,750
Mercer, N.J.	236,667
Ann Arbor, Mich.	233,875
Monmouth, N.J.	226,500
Moderately expensive	
Seattle	174,750
Brooklyn, N.Y.	172,500
Kansas City, Mo.	172,500
Harrisburg, Pa.	172,333
Camden, N.J.	169,500
Moderately inexpensive	
Columbia, S.C.	148,350
Portland, Ore.	147,833
Tucson, Ariz.	145,000
Green Bay, Wis.	144,600
Syracuse, N.Y.	144,475
Inexpensive	
San Antonio	96,045
Leavenworth, Kan.	93,870
Tulsa, Okla.	93,225
Corpus Christi, Texas	87,975
Oklahoma City	75,750

Sources: Coldwell Banker; Sumichrast Report, Rockville, Md.
NHCN chart

At least if you live in California, *locale of eight of the country's 10 most expensive single-family home markets; by comparison, Seattle seems to be a relative bargain. Alternatively, you could have driven to Oklahoma City and picked up a house for $75,750, the lowest price among the 100 cities rated.*

CONTENTS

National News 1-4
International News 3
Contractor Report 7
Editorial/Commentary 10

Buying & Selling

Toppers, blinds enhance windows, bottom line 13
Battery makers power up promotions 13
Molding's profile gains prominence 15

Perspectives

Report on NHCN's Golden Hammer Ad & Marketing Awards:
Scotty's brings home the gold with bold, new approach 19
Stock Lumber's billboard changes with the seasons 43
Dealers use print ads, special events to push services, image 46
Wolohan gets into the game 46

Company Index 62
Advertisers Index 62

NEWS BRIEFS

Mr. Goodbuys founder goes all-American

PHILADELPHIA — A decade after Steve Erlbaum opened his first Mr. Goodbuys on Castor Avenue in this city, he is returning to the same location with another new retailing concept.

The store, to be called Uncle Sam's, is slated to open in June. It will sell American-made goods with "something of everything, including home center items," according to Erlbaum. Vendors familiar with Erlbaum's plans said that he intends to offer off-price hardlines, apparel and food in this unit.

Erlbaum and partner Robert Shein, together with two former Mr. Goodbuys executives, Ray Savett and George Chaker, are said to be looking at a total of six prospective sites.

The first test unit will open in the 80,000-square-foot inner-city store that Erlbaum was leasing to Mr. Goodbuys before it liquidated.

Erlbaum currently operates a Simple Simons Surplus store and Dollar World (where every item is priced at a dollar) within the city.

Industry group for women updates logo

CHICAGO — Women in the Hardware Industry introduced an updated logo and presented new business cards during a breakfast meeting at the National Home Center Show.

The cards list the association's purpose, which includes leadership development of women in the home improvement industries and provision of educational programs, materials and opportunities for professionals in the industry.

For information, contact Kathryn Kay, vp-membership, at (216) 498-2335.

Truckers face tough new regulations

NATIONAL REPORT — America's truckers will face drug and alcohol testing on intrastate hauls if a new act passes the final ruling stage on Oct. 28, according to Robert Redmond, a specialist with the Department of Transportation.

The regulations limit blood alcohol to 0.04 percent; currently "normal" state limits are 0.1 percent.

Also this week, more than 85 percent of America's truckers are carrying new licenses.

The Commercial Drivers License (CDL) from the Federal Highway Administration is meant to make the roads safer by getting certain truckers—those with suspended licenses or driver's licenses from more than one state—off the road. Individual states administered the written and driving test, which had to be passed by April 1.

Drivers of vehicles weighing more than 26,001 pounds (truck and load) must hold the new license, as well as those with more than 15 passengers.

Videotape offer

A videotape showing all of the Golden Hammer winners, with commentary, is available from *National Home Center News* for $59.99.

Inquiries should be directed to editorial assistant Diane Fristachi, 212-756-5142 (phone) or 212-756-5295 (fax).

COMMUNITY SERVICE

GTE Sylvania shines a light on reading

DANVERS, Mass. — GTE Sylvania, together with its major vendors, has launched a $1 million promotion to encourage parents to read with their children.

"America's Official Reading Time" campaign hopes to stimulate parents to read with their children from 7 to 8 p.m. every night.

The first print ads broke on Feb. 14 in USA Today, and TV spots aired during the "Today Show" on Feb 24. Public service TV spots will follow during the second quarter of the year, and retailers will then become involved at the store and community level in the fall.

Sylvania's major retailer customers each contributed $7,500 toward the campaign for POP material and consumer booklets for their stores. At present, 10 home centers have signed up according to Robert Brands, Sylvania marketing manager: Builders Square, Builders Emporium, Central Hardware, Grossman's, Handy Andy, Lowe's, NHD Stores, Payless Cashways, Pay 'N Pak and Scotty's.

Dealers offer consumers a free copy of a booklet called "How to Get Kids Excited About Reading" with a purchase of Sylvania's light bulbs. The booklet was prepared with assistance from Reading Is Fundamental (RIF), a non-profit children's literacy organization.

Weiser gives door hardware for housing

SEAL BEACH, Calif. — Weiser Lock is working on both local and national fronts to help the cause of affordable housing.

The lockset maker recently donated all necessary door hardware to complete a shelter for Shalom House, a foundation for economically disadvantaged single women and children, located near the company's new facility in Tucson, Ariz. And on the national level, Weiser, a division of Masco Corp., is donating knobs and locks to Habitat for Humanity's planned 1,800 new homes in 1992.

Employees of HomeClub help United Way

FULLERTON, Calif. — Employees at the 73 HomeClub stores and the chain's corporate office here donated a total of $175,946 to the United Way's charity coalition.

"Our team members really pulled together to demonstrate commitment to the community," said company president Jim Halpin in a prepared release.

HomeClub, which sponsors a charity drive every year, presented the pledges to the Orange County, Calif., chapter of the United Way, which will distribute the money to various non-profit organizations.